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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 197 (2015) 737 – 744

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

7th World Conference on Educational Sciences, (WCES-2015), 05-07 February 2015, Novotel
Athens Convention Center, Athens, Greece

Managing the Transfer of Information

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Abstract

In order to manage the transfer of the intended message several requirements have to be met. The article focusses on finding ways to improve the transfer of EU information to people involved in the zootechnical field living in the rural areas of the Timis County. Studies made pointed out that the small farmers were not properly informed as far as accessing EU financial resources are concerned. The research was triggered by the low rate of absorption funds by the people involved in the zootechnical sector. The transfer of information is analysed in general, and in particular the transfer of information as far as the European Funds for agriculture is concerned. Particular emphasis is on put on presenting the elements of the communication process that have to be met in order to reach the intended communication objectives and find out those which influence the correct deciphering of the message. The analysis is made from the mass communication approach. One way to improve the situation of the zootechnical sector in the Timis County is to ensure that the information the small farmers, need and get, is correct and adapted to their level of understanding.

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Peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.

Keywords: communication process; transfer of information; mass communication; European funding; zootechny; semi-subsistence farms.

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1. Introduction

The proper transfer of information is essential in any type of communication irrespective of the field. Communication is “part of the action and refection, just as coins are part of the economy” (Zemor, 2003, p. 26, our translation). In order to manage the transfer of the intended message several requirements have to be met. The article focusses on presenting the elements of the communication process that have to be met in order to reach the intended objectives. The transfer of information is analysed in general, and in particular the transfer of information as far as the European Funds for agriculture is concerned.

The research was triggered by the low rate of absorption funds by the people involved in the zootechnical sector (Constantin, 2012, 2014). The research findings (Bidireac, et al. 2014) also indicated that the farmers are not properly informed on how to meet the EU standards for the dairy products.

We think that irrespective of the field of activity, it is essential that people have basic knowledge about the communication process in order to be able to evaluate/conceive a message able to transmit the intended message.

2. The basic elements of the communication process

As far as communication is concerned, Lasswell’s paradigm (1948) is perhaps one of the most known formulas to highlight the fundamentals of mass communication. According to him: any act of communication can be described by the answers to the following questions: Who? Says what? In what channel? To whom? With what effect? Although criticized for its simplicity, the model allows many applications in the mass communication research.

Another known theory on communication, the Shannon and Weaver’s theory, implies the transfer of a message from one point to another as accurately as possible, i.e.: information transfer. An important element added to Lasswell’s paradigm is the concept of *noise* which might influence the communication process. Noise is generally defined as: “anything that distorts the message intended by the source, anything that interferes with the receiver’s receiving the message as the source intended the message to be received” (DeVito, 1986, p. 209). Therefore, the distorted information provided can enhance uncertainty. Whereas a certain degree of uncertainty can be favourable to the sender/source for manipulation reasons, it is in the detriment of the receivers. Noise is a variable, much too often, used deliberately by the institutional communicators for an implicit manipulation of the intended meaning of the message.

Another important element added to the first model of communication by the cybernetic model of communication was the concept of feed-back. It denotes a permanent adaptation to the communication context, i.e.: the sender and the receiver keep interchange the communication vectors.

3. Mass communication

Communication in general has several particularities, i.e.: “it is a process which is developed in a certain context, which is dynamic, irreversible, and its significance can vary function to the participants” (Tran and Stanciuneanu, 2001 p.16-17, our translation). In principle, any communication act has a few essential elements: sender, message, channel and receiver, to which various theoretic models of communication add other elements, such as: coding, decoding, reception context, feed-back, etc.

We are going to tackle the communication process from the mass communication approach. Mass culture associated with mass communication is: “a popular product, a commercial one, homogeneous, non-traditional and nonliteral” (McQuail, 1999). In the past much of the mass communication was implicit, under various forms, such as: folklore, traditional wisdom, aphorisms, etc.

The term mass communication can be used for “any communication having as purpose, at least secondary if not principal, to make public attitudes and ideas” (Stappers, 1973). The elements of mass communication are mainly the same as for other types of communication, i.e.: the source, which uses codes to transform the information in a message, the sender which transforms the message in transmittable information, channel which transmits the information, the receiver which decodes the message.

In mass communication the sender is habitually part of an organisation, and experts in communication draw up and sent the message. These are professionals, part of a group characterised by a high degree of control and

cohesion. It is generally known that mass communication is used by various institutions to send a symbolic content to numerous audiences, heterogeneous and much dispersed. Obviously, this asymmetry has social and political consequences influencing the opinions, attitudes and behaviour of the receivers.

The senders use various channels to transmit the message publicly and simultaneously, and they operate in a system which is "well organized, complex and which involves costs" (Wright, 1959). From a special-temporal point of view, mass communication is indirect and unilateral (Maletzke, 1963).

As far as the receiver is concerned, this is "a non-delimited public, non-structured, non-organized" (Maletzke, 1963). Mass communication is characterised by: "the large scale, large communities not individuals, heterogeneous communities, different types of senders and receivers, all connected by exposure to the same information" (McQuail, 1999). Hence, the collective receiver, the audience, is an aggregate made up of separate individuals which lack group consciousness and are heterogeneous from all points of view.

The relationship between the senders and the receivers is asymmetric, unequal, favouring the source. Therefore we can conclude that unlike any types of public communication, in mass communication there is a low feedback, but paradoxically with a huge impact on the social life in the contemporary period.

3.1. The message in mass communication

In fact, the message is a key element in any model or communication theory. As far as the conception of the message is concerned, the source can be influenced by the: existence of the presuppositions, the routine in the communication process, etc. Evidently, a mass communication tool is not a channel that transports ideas from one place to another, but it "represents in fact a subjective, interpretative, ideological form [...] the ideology becomes familiar in routine situations" (Martin-Barbera, 1993, p. 102).

Lull (1999, p. 14) states that "the content of the mass messages is never innocent, as organized thinking never is". The continuous manipulation of information of the public image constructs a "powerful dominant ideology". Ideologies are considered "maps of intelligibility, and mass-media tools of ideological representations" (Hall, 1986); political tones and the trajectories are not easily recognized; only thus they can have an ideological impact (Lull, 1999:20). The planned ambiguities have a manipulator force, especially when they are on a favourable ground. Dubitative statements or even words that induce doubt can determine an attitude or opinion, mainly when there is a sentimental predisposition, sympathy or antipathy. For example: seduction is manifested in everyday life by an attitude of goodwill, by compliments, by condescendence, etc. In Romania, it still persists a tradition from the communist period, from the communist dictatorship, i.e.: the seduction language centered on the naivety theme. Intelligent people can charm the interlocutor by simulating stupidity. The more a person displays its intellectual inability, the more agreeable he is, and in time he succeeds in manipulating in his favour the seduced ones. The tactics consist of pretended wonderings, stupid questions, which gives the interlocutor the possibility to show off his/her intelligence.

An idea accepted today is that "there is no message without a certain amount of ambiguity" (Empson, 1981, p.98, our translation). Much too often, messages are more implicit than explicit, as a word, in any language, has a certain peculiarity beyond its significance function, i.e.: the semantic one. Not all the times the message sent is received as intended because "any piece of information has also a certain semantic value" (Van Cuilenburg at al.1998, p.30, our translation). Therefore there might be a significant difference between the intended semantic information, the information that the sender wants to send, and the received semantic information. In a given context, "words have other significances that surpass the neuter reference standards, being able to trigger associations and different reaction" (Van Cuilenburg, at al.1998, p.179, our translation). Words have a general significance, valid for all the speakers, and a variable significance, for just some of the speakers. For example, the word *rain* has different significances for the farmers and tourists. For the former it means, most of the times, richness, fertility, whereas for the latter a bad holiday day. However rain can also have negative connotation for farmers, sometimes can mean the destruction of the crops, floods, death for animals, destruction of households, etc.

Words have a spell power, since any word or expression constructed as a sentence, contains a judgment which is supposed to be true. There are two aspects: "it has to be semantically correct in order to be logical. Unless it is semantically constituted it cannot be true. And therefore in any sentence, in any word, the hidden side, the concealed

part, is larger than the revealed side and therefore we always reveal to some extent” (Boboc: 2009, p.10; our translation).

3.2. The role and values of information in mass communication

In our contemporary society *information is a powerful resource* (McQuail, 1999, our translation). According to Botezat et al., “the concept of information, irrespective of the field, contains a high generalization degree” (2007, p.75), and has “certain contents not known to the receivers previous to the communication process” (Prakke, 1968).

As far as information conveyance (Van Cuilenburg at al.1998, p.37; our translation) is concerned there are two distinct stages: information transfer and information assistance. In the first stage the sender uses a certain communication technology and makes the information available to the general public, and the second one ensures the access to information and the ways of displaying and transmitting it. The second stage consists of various types of assistance: “The whole process of collecting, stocking, distribution, correlation and providing information, process that aims at the optimization to the access or to the optimal exploitation of the data base (Van Cuilenburg at al.: 1998, p.39 our translation).

It is important to highlight that, for a receiver, the value of a message is directly dependable on the quantity of novelty of the message and on the quantity of information s/he is able to understand/to extract from the message. The results of the research studies indicate that a message lacks value when it is either too sophisticated to be understood by the receivers or is full of banalities and sends nothing new.

In transferring the information we should not overlook the other values of the information, besides the one to send information, i.e.: semantic value, pragmatic value, and last but not least, the economic value.

As far as the formal informative value of information is concerned, studies indicated that information does not always have the estimated effect and that “an increased quantity of information loses its informative function” (Van Cuilenburg at al.1998). The term used for this type of information is pseudo-information and it denotes the information without specific recipients and without significance.

The pragmatic value of information or the pragmatic aspect of information refers to what happens to the information after being sent, whether its purpose is attained or not, whether it gets the intended effect or not. The information value remains “a pragmatic concept, is selective and understood only by a certain public, which also sets how high the value is” (Van Cuilenburg at al.1998, p.33; our translation)

As far as the market product is concerned the information is considered to have an economic value, as, unlike other goods, information is: “A source which not only that it does not end, but even more, it amplifies” (Naisbitt,1984, p.30), and does not need high transport or storage costs.

4. The perception of information

Being able to understand any piece of information implies training, and training implies education. The effects of the information entered into the sub-consciousness are directly connected to the main idea of the information, based on a pre-existent culture. On this background, it is possible that it leads to “changes in behavior, mentality, probably even mutations, by repetitions and suggestions” (Rusti, 2005, p. 91; our translation). Words structure thinking and at the same time they reflect a reality, which they create.

Receiving information is not equivalent to understanding it, as communication involves a particular way of thinking, often called communicational thinking. This modern tool of the modern philosophy, according to Bernard Miegé, “organizes the scientific exercises, reflexive or professional”, and at the same time answers the requirements made by the state or other big organizations, and which really inspire changes at these levels. More than this, the communicative thinking accompanies the cultural practices, the ways of transmitting the information, or the ways of acquiring new knowledge”(Miegé: 1988, p.15; our translation).

As to the way in which people receive and process the information, as well as the way in which they assume consciously certain opinions or conceptions, the research made by Berelson and Steiner (1964), Bennett, Hoffman and Prakash (1989), Scott (1994) sustain a conclusion which is generally accepted, i.e.: “perception is a cognitive activity, that implies making some interferences. It is influenced by psychological factors which introduce a certain degree of subjectivity”. Studies have emphasized that the perception of a message does not depend only on the

problems specific to the communication process, but it depends also on semiotics, logics, etc. All these factors influence the perception of a message and determine different reactions or no reactions at all.

The process of interpreting the information is extremely complex and to be able to decipher it other selective processes are involved, such as: “selective exposure, selective attention, and selective memory” (Severin and Tankard, 2004, our translation). Studies demonstrated that perception is an active interpretative process, since, while we are processing the information regarding an event, we are attaching to it the values and the judgments determined by the specificity of our culture.

The perception of a message can also be influenced by other factors that occur during the communication process, such as: “language barriers, conception barriers, barriers caused by the position of the sender and receiver” (Saules, apud Tran and Stanciungeanu, 2001, p.13; our translation). The receiver of the message can be confronted with personal particular problems of understanding the message, such as: the existence of presuppositions and the routine in the communication process, lack of attention or lack of interest, which can lead to false conclusions. In the category of language barriers we can name: the use of ambiguous words or expressions, different level of training, preconceptions, and to all of these we can add the cultural factors (Saules, apud Tran & Stanciungeanu, 2001, pp. 22-23; our translation).

As above mentioned, the process of interpreting the messages is extremely complex, people’s perception being influenced by physical aspects and by psychological factors as well. The psychological factors influence perception and bring a degree of subjectivity, leading to a selective perception. This can explain why an audience can perceive a message totally different. As far as mass communication is concerned the message can reach the receiver without reaching its intended purpose.

The scientific research on perception and information processing provide the data and the tools needed to understand the way in which people understand the words and the images they receive as messages; taking them into consideration can improve the communication skills and eventually help people develop their business.

5. The transfer of information in EU programs for zootechny

5.1. General information on the zootechnical sector in the Timis County

The zootechnical sector represents a major branch in the economy of the county. Statistics show that in Romania the zootechnical sector occupies the second place in the animal production (Petroman, 2007, p. 11; our translation) and is to reach 50% of the total agricultural production. Its efficiency is also due to the fact that it is not seasonal. Animal rising represents an important branch of the agriculture in the Timis County, mainly in the cattle and swine sector. More than this animal breeding represents a secular tradition. The analysis of the statistical data indicate that between 1990 and 2010 a constant and general decrease of the number of animals, presumably caused by the lack of control in animal slaughter after 1990, by the aging of the population and also by the lack of interest for this field shown by authorities. Statistics also indicate that animal production comes mainly from the private sector.

In Romania, the rural space represents approximately 90% of the county surface, and the percentage of the inhabitants of the rural space is among the highest in Europe, i.e. 45% of the country population (9.7 inhabitants). In the Timis County 256,431 people live in the rural space, representing 37.8% of the county population. The development of the local community also presupposes the evaluation of the impact that the changes that took place both at the macro and micro economic level.

Joining the EU meant for Romania a profound transformation of the structure of agriculture, and implicitly on the social life of the population tightly connected to the agricultural activities. However, the model of the European village is far from what the traditional village means. According to Eurostat, in the European countries, the industry and mainly the service industry have replaced animal breeding or agriculture as main activities in the rural space.

A special attention should be paid to the Romanian subsistence farms, which according to the Common Agricultural Policy and Article 34 of the Council Regulation, are small exploitations managed by families, and are usually associated with production for personal use and with a low level as far as market participation is concerned. The situation of the Romanian farmer is special as he is not only the producer but also the consumer of the products. Even more, the recent statistics indicate a decrease in the commercial activities which is mainly manifested in

financial benefits, and the increase of the own consumption level. One of the causes is the precarious situation of the rural house holding and last but not least the low income resulted from selling the products. Over 81% of the individual agricultural exploitations use the products for self-consumption more than 50% of the products obtained. However, the rural population played a special part in the European integration process; process that has affected this segment rather much. For them European funds represent the main financial source for the development programs.

5.2. The need for a better management of the information transfer in the zootechnical sector in the Timis County

There is a complex process as far as communicating European Union affairs is concerned as it has to cope with a lot of obstacles, both at the community level and at the member states levels as well. More than this, the official communication is difficult because the senders and the recipients are categories different from various points of view, i.e.: linguistic, cultural, ethic, political, etc.

We have been studying for some time the role played by communication in accessing European funds by the small farmers in the Timis district (Constantin 2012; Constantin and Petroman 2012a; Constantin and Petroman, 2012b; Constantin 2014a; Constantin 2014b) and the information needed to obtain better results in the farming sector (Bidireac et al. 2014).

In our analysis on the way in which the transfer of information was made for the people living in the rural areas we used the key elements of the communication process, i.e.: source/ sender, channel, message, receivers.

- Source/ senders - The results also pointed out a discrepancy between the level of information of the people living in the Timis County on European funds and the large number of sources that provide information on this matter.
- Channel - the fact that the main source of information on European Union and European funds is mass media. It was also noticed the lack of an functional system to ensure the transfer of information from the public local administration to the ordinary people. The lack of coherent actions to communicate information on the regional and local development in general. As far as the channels are concerned, there are opinions which sustain that modern informational technology limits the free access to information and can lead to an increase of the social inequity, due to the inequity in information. On the other hand, other opinions advocate that these new technologies miss the main point, i.e.: the main purpose is communication and not technology. Even if the abundance of information we have access to should have a beneficial effect on the society, much too often it is not the case. Firstly, because not all the people have access to the sources of information the urban people do. Even more, studies indicate that not even all the people living in urban areas do, but mainly those with higher education, relatively young and well paid. Therefore other methods should be used, closer to characteristics of the target audience: regular meeting
- Receivers - The results of the surveys indicated a high degree of awareness as far as the social problems Romania is confronting with, both at the local and the national level. The findings also indicated a misunderstanding of the European message, lack of involvement of the authorities for the promotion of European financing, disregard for the cultural factor, lack of interest as far as political decisions are concerned, even at the national level. At the group level, people have some general information about European financing, but very few have complete and corrects information to make educated decisions. The results did not indicated major differences as far as access to information on European funding is concerned between people who live in rural areas and the ones who live in urban areas. The developing of the zootechnical field in particular as the time they have at their disposal for documentation and the sources used do not allow them to have correct and detailed information in order to be able to take well documented decisions. Another important factor to consider is the ability to select the socially indispensable information. We cannot overlook the individual ability to process the information and we have to find the appropriate methods to improve communication on European funding and agricultural consulting as well, taking into consideration the specificity of the Romanian farmer.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion we can say that the proper transfer of information is essential in any type of communication irrespective of the field. In order to manage the transfer of the intended message several requirements have to be met. In principle, any communication act has a few essential elements: sender, message, channel and receiver, to which various theoretic models of communication add other elements, such as: coding, decoding, reception context, feed-back, etc.

In mass communication the sender is habitually part of an organization characterized by a high degree of control and cohesion. It is generally known that mass communication is used by various institutions to send a symbolic content to numerous audiences, heterogeneous and much dispersed. Obviously, this asymmetry has social and political consequences influencing the opinions, attitudes and behaviour of the receivers.

As far as the receiver is concerned, this is an aggregate made up of separate individuals which lack group consciousness and are heterogeneous from all points of view. The relationship between the senders and the receivers is asymmetric, unequal, favouring the source. Therefore, we can conclude that unlike any types of public communication, in mass communication there is a low feedback, but paradoxically with a huge impact on the social life in the contemporary period.

The message is a key element in any model or communication theory and its value is directly dependable on the quantity of novelty of the message and on the quantity of information the receiver is able to understand. A message lacks value when it is either too sophisticated to be understood by the receivers or is full of banalities and sends nothing new. In transferring the information we should not overlook all the values of the information: sending information, semantic value, pragmatic value, economic.

The ability to understand the information received implies training, and training implies education. Receiving information is not equivalent to understanding it, as communication involves a particular way of thinking and surpassing various barriers. We can conclude that perception is individual, is particular to each individual, and influenced by life experience, training, or the conditions in which information is received.

The results also pointed out a discrepancy between the level of information of the people living in the Timis County on European funds and the large number of sources that provide information on this matter. The transfer of information on EU policy needs to be improved to meet the needs of the ordinary farmers, to provide coherent actions to communicate information on the regional and local development in general.

Acknowledgements

This paper was published under the frame of European Social Fund, Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2007-2013, project no. POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132765.

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